

CONTACT:

BUYING RECYCLED A TRUE BARGAIN FOR EARTH

Most Massachusetts citizens help the recycling effort by putting materials in their recycling bin or taking them to a drop-off center. But how many people know that buying stuff made from recycled materials is equally important. By purchasing recycled content products you are doing your part to help maintain market demand for recyclables and to ensure the continuation of recycling programs everywhere. If consumers purchase more products with recycled content, manufacturers will continue to incorporate recyclables into their products and expand the usage to even more products.

Know the symbol

The three cycling arrows is the universal symbol of recycling and printed on millions of products that can be recycled, or have been made from recycled content. Each arrow in the recycling logo represents one step in the three-step process that completes the recycling loop.

The first step is collection. This is when you put your recyclable materials into your curbside recycling bin or take it to a local recycling drop-off center. The collected materials are then processed and sold to manufacturing facilities, such as steel, paper and glass mills.

The manufacturing process is represented in the second arrow. The recyclable materials are converted into new products and shipped to stores across the country to be placed on shelves as new consumer goods.

The third step is where you, the consumer, purchase products made with recycled content. When you "Buy Recycled," you complete the recycling loop.

NOVEMBER ARTICLE

Be Careful!

Don't let the symbols deceive you. The recycling symbol does not necessarily mean that a product is made with recycled content or that it can be recycled in your community. Many plastic products are coded with a recycling symbol, indicating that somewhere they may be recyclable, but it is unlikely that they are accepted in local programs. A recycling logo does not necessarily imply recyclability. Check with your local recycling program to see what is accepted. Also, read the label carefully for specific information on recycled content.

Sign Me Up

How do I know for sure that I'm buying recycled? Some types of materials always have a high percentage of recycled content. These include products made from steel, aluminum, glass and paper. Paper products, such as thin cardboard packaging used for cereal, cake mixes and cracker boxes; corrugated cardboard; and other types of packaging usually have high post consumer content.

Other products commonly made from recycled materials include re-refined motor oil, fiberfill for sleeping bags, carpet, shoes, pencils, recycling bins, clothing, building insulation, wallboard, tiles, and many more. Read the labels!

Read the Label

Some products may not be made with any recycled content so be sure to read the labels. Look for the highest percentage of "post consumer recycled content" you can find. Post-consumer is the material consumers and businesses recycle; it doesn't include manufacturers' waste.

Be the Recycling Boss

Because of the tremendous buying power of businesses, institutions, and government agencies, these organizations send a message to manufacturers by the

NOVEMBER ARTICLE

products they choose. When businesses buy recycled, they assure manufacturers that a consistent, long-term demand exists for the recycled products.

Economic Sense

Several studies have shown that recycling related businesses have substantial economic development benefits.

A study of 10 states in the Northeast found that more than 100,000 people are employed in firms that process recyclables or use them in manufacturing. The study also estimates that more than \$7.2 billion in value is added to recyclables in the Northeast through processing and manufacturing. A similar study of 13 states and territories in the Southeast found that nearly 140,000 people are employed by firms that process recyclables or use them in manufacturing. The value added to recyclables for that region was estimated at \$18.5 billion.

A bonus for the Earth

Recycling saves energy, natural resources, and landfill space. In most cases, making products from recycled materials also creates less air and water pollution than making products from brand new materials.

"Buy Recycled" Myths

Here are four common myths and misconceptions about recycled products:

- **Recycled products are hard to find.** This used to be true, but no longer. From the neighborhood grocery store to national retailers, stores sell thousands of products made from or packaged in recycled content material.
- **Recycled paper isn't as good as nonrecycled paper.** Recycled content papers now share the same printing and performance characteristics as their "virgin" equivalent. Recycled papers no longer look different. You can now find recycled content papers with the same whiteness and brightness as virgin papers. They also offer the same level of performance on copiers, and laser and ink jet printers.
- **Recycled products cost more.** This used to be the case for some materials, but times have changed. Many recycled products are priced competitively with their nonrecycled counterparts. In fact, some may be less expensive.

NOVEMBER ARTICLE

- **Recycled products are inferior in quality.** This is simply not true. Recycled products have the same quality, reliability, and dependability. A 1996 survey by the Buy Recycled Business Alliance asked hundreds of corporate purchasing agents about their satisfaction with recycled content products. The survey results showed that 97% of respondents were pleased with the performance of recycled content products.

-###-